

Thanks for all the fish

Tom Coughlin, R6 Director

I was going to call this blog “So long, and thanks for all the fish,” referring to Douglas Adams’s Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy books, but a funny thing happened at the IEEE meeting series in November. After that meeting, and with the OK from my wife Fran, I am a candidate, along with a really nice guy named Guru, for IEEE USA President Elect. Guru was the 2016 IEEE USA Professional Activities Vice President, a role that I will have in 2017. So instead of just retiring from the IEEE Board at the end of the year, I am now going to be running a campaign. So I guess I can’t say “so long” quite yet.

But I did want to let you know that I am really honored and enjoyed being your Region 6 Director and working with all the great volunteers in our region, as well as in all the different parts of the IEEE. The last two years have been fulfilling and I really learned a lot about the way IEEE works and who does what. The IEEE is an amazing but complex organization and the people I have met have generally been dedicated to doing their best. In the many branches of the organization dedicated volunteers and their staff partners are contributing to help others, supporting a great technical organization and creating technology for the benefit of humanity.

I am very pleased with what we have accomplished in the last two years and looking forward to Kathleen Kramer’s contributions as the 2017 and 2018 IEEE Region 6 Director. Let’s take a quick look at some of the things that we have done in 2015 and 2016.

- Our Rising Stars Conference for Young Professional and Student members will be in early January 2017 and it is now being driven by the Young Professionals (and not just from Region 6 but from all over).
- GHTC is going strong and will be held in San Jose, CA in October 2017.
- Our SusTech conference is growing again and in 2017 we plan to do activities on sustainable technologies there with IEEE Technical Activities, leading to new opportunities for greater growth and influence
- We had almost all new Area Chairs in 2016, giving new volunteers a chance to develop their leadership skills
- We increased the Region assessment, giving us more money to create initiatives to serve our members
- We have a big boost in Senior Memberships this year, with the Phoenix section alone getting over 65 new senior members in a special SM push
- We also conducted a special program to elevate members in key roles in companies in Region 6 to Senior Members
- We continued to expand the technical chapter meeting recording initiative with training at Region 6 meetings and in all IEEE Regions except for Regions 1 and 2
- In 2015 we held a joint Region 4 and 6 Opcom meeting. In 2016 we expanded this to include the Region 5 Excom as well as the Regions 4 and 6

Opcoms. We also had lots of attendees from many other regions as well as standards and technical activities

- Region 6, along with the Santa Clara Valley Section and the Consultants Network of Silicon Valley had a successful booth at the San Mateo Maker Faire. We have funding to continue this in 2017.
- The Central Area had their Spring meeting in Hawaii
- We were able to get special “corporate membership” efforts started with a few companies in Region 6 who are being offered discounts in IEEE memberships if they will subsidize and promote employee membership.
- We completed and started several IEEE Engineering Milestones in 2015 and 2016, included some outside of the San Francisco Bay Area
- Our Region 6 volunteer Hawaii shirts were a big hit and in high demand

Finally I want to tell you what I have been saying at our Region 6 meetings this year. There are limits to resources. There are limits to time, space and energy. But to the prepared mind, there are **no limits** to knowledge. **And that makes all the difference.**

- We can accomplish amazing things with a reasoned optimistic attitude
- There is more to learn than has ever been learned
- There is more to do than has ever been done, and
- There is a greater need than ever for those who know how to do things—the engineers

So thanks for being a volunteer. In my mind a volunteer is a really generous person who contributes their time, passion and vision to help get things done and change the world. And thanks for all the fish, even if it isn't so long.